



Esprit de Corps

A Bulletin of the Washington Service Corps



SPRING & SUMMER 2009

VOLUME X ISSUE 2

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SERVES Reflection

*By Tammie Berman,
Washington Reading
Corps member,
Olympia*

As I left on the bus to go to Yakima for SERVES, it hit me that this will be my last conference for the Washington Service Corps and AmeriCorps. All kinds of emotions have been building up as the end of my term comes closer and closer.

I was looking through the conference information and decided to take a workshop with Ben Anderson-Nathe called "Between a rock and a hard place: Ethical decision making in practice." In this workshop, we focused on what types of ethics come

put into a situation where

we have to decide which ethic is more important. Ben asked, "If a newspaper comes and interviews you, are you going to like what they have to say about you?" Whether the answer is yes or no, you still need to go through a process and perhaps fix what is going

on.

Another workshop I took was by Alan Wong and Devon Little of Power of Hope. It was called "Theater for Community Building." They focused on creating safe space for risk taking. I learned different theater games that would help build connections and create strategies for implementing theater games into a program. We acted scenarios out in this improvisational theater workshop. It was an amazing experience.

The third workshop I took was by Mike Beebe on "Youth Group Facilitation Skills." The workshop focused on learning good techniques and incorporating interesting activities when facilitating youth groups. Mike taught us through an activity that involved efficiency.

The last workshop I attended was another by Mike Beebe called "Effective Ally Work." In this workshop, we discussed diversity, white privilege, power and oppression. We also talked about institutional power, how structure is already setup for you and unearned advantages.

In order to do this workshop we set down some working agreements and group agreements. Then we discussed the topic and what it

meant to us. We also reflected on the workshop and discussed our own experiences with AmeriCorps, team members and personal situations.

When the workshops were finished and I climbed on that bus one last time to come home, I could not help but reflect on the workshops, as well as the last two years of my life.

This experience has been the best two years of my life. I am looking forward to using all these techniques in some form or fashion.

I have been trying to figure out my next step after AmeriCorps and I know whatever I do AmeriCorps made me a better person. I would like to learn more on all these topics, so I am going to go to school and get a degree that focuses on facilitation and education. I could see myself in either career.



Camelot Square Happenings

By Adam Wahlen, Washington Service Corps member, Federal Way

The Camelot Square After School Program serves approximately 50 kindergarten through fifth grade students, Monday through Thursday afternoons, from 3:30 to 5:30 p.m.

The students are engaged with a variety of entertaining academic activities ranging from math and literacy to art, science, social studies and language arts.

We begin each day with a snack provided by Nutrition Services. The students have the opportunity to engage with our leaders and volunteers about their day and get a head start on homework and/or reading. This time of debriefing and light work is just one example of a time when students are engaged by our team of AmeriCorps members and community volunteers. During this snack time, all students are encouraged to look up the word of the day in the various dictionaries floating about the room to increase their vocabulary and receive a small prize.

In the later afternoon, we move into homework and reading time. The students are divided among four table groups, each with a leader and as many volunteers as we can accommodate. During this time, students begin homework from school; typically, these students require assistance from the leaders and/or the volunteers with math and language arts assignments. When students have completed their homework, or for those students who

do not have homework for that day, they travel across the room to browse our library's selection of books, choosing one and reading for the remainder of the time allotted.

The next activity in the afternoon is a Joke of the Day or a Professor Hubble-Bubble Letter. The joke of the day is exactly what it sounds like, a (mostly) corny, kid friendly joke told by one of the leaders. The Professor Hubble-Bubble letter, read on Wednesdays and Thursdays, are a form of verbal and visual encouragement and "star power" gifted to students seen demonstrating an exceptional work ethic, outstanding behavior or an unbelievable amount of compassion and empathy for their fellow students. The letter is written by one of the AmeriCorps volunteers and signed as Prof. Hubble-Bubble, a highly intelligent woman who accidentally made herself invisible and now praises the students at Camelot Square.

The Camelot Square After School Program starts around 4:30 p.m. and is one of many engaging math activities or games, designed to enhance the student's mathematical skill set. Each table, lead by an AmeriCorps member, is given supplies and instructions, and works as a small group to complete the

activity.

Towards the end of the day, the students are given the opportunity to expand their horizons with a special activity, either art, language arts, social studies or a science experiment. This is another activity that the students complete in small groups, under the direction of their AmeriCorps leaders and volunteers.

At the end of the day, it is clean-up and line-up time. If the children are not picked up, AmeriCorps members walk them home.



Nadia Weiner, Washington Service Corps member working with the kids at the Camelot Square after school program.



Kirsten Thornton, Washington Service Corps member sharing the joy of reading with a student.



AmeriCorps Members Serve and Lead Over 90 Youth Through Civic Engagement

By Elise Cope, Project Supervisor, Habitat for Humanity, Redmond

The Habitat for Humanity of East King County AmeriCorps team is partnering with over 90 youths in Sammamish from Eastside Catholic School and the Renaissance School of Art and Reasoning (RSAR) to lead them through a series of workshops on civic engagement.

The partnership is timely, especially with the current administration's "summoning of a new spirit of service" and the recent passing of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America act in Congress, which will increase and enhance opportunities for Americans of all ages to serve as AmeriCorps members each year.

The *Roadmap to Civic Engagement* is designed to teach young people about the values, history and actions that have shaped our country and continue to shape it today. More than that, it is an opportunity to empower youth to become part of that process themselves by developing and carrying out a community service project, thereby fostering in them a sense of the value in being active participants of our community.

All 74 eighth grade students at Eastside Catholic and 15 students at RSAR have been meeting with AmeriCorps members every Tuesday and Friday since March 6. To kick off the project, six teachers from Eastside Catholic, 72 youths and all 15 of the Habitat for Humanity East King County AmeriCorps members

gathered at Natures Last Stand Farm in Carnation and aided the farm owners in cleaning up after flood damage and planting potato and onion starts to catch up for seasonal planting time lost. This service project gave the young people a taste of what service is all about, preparing them to create a service project of their very own by June.



Walla Walla's Amazing AmeriRACE

By Kristen Sayers, program assistant, Blue Mountain Action Council, Walla Walla

To borrow from the U.S. Postal Service, neither rain, nor sleet, nor gloom of night shall keep the Amazing AmeriRACERs from their finishing flight.

On April 3, twenty Blue Mountain Action Council (BMAC) AmeriCorps team members in Walla Walla gathered at the lake to begin the eight-hour Amazing AmeriRACE. In teams of four, the AmeriRACERs confronted intersections, speed bumps, roadblocks and rest stops in their search for the race's *Pit Stop*.

Teams fished for clues in the snow and were asked to travel by Ameri-TAXI to the Marcus Whitman Historic Hotel. At the hotel, teams were asked to locate a series of

historic paintings to receive their next clue. Throughout the rest of the day, teams hunted for puzzle pieces, assembled 150 visitor packets for the Whitman Mission Historic Site, participated at the Hawk's Point Ropes Course, gathered more than 500 cans of food for the BMAC Food Bank, and

painted over more than 3,000 square feet of graffiti for the City of Walla Walla.

Keeping with the AmeriCorps spirit, several service projects were completed during the course of the race.

"I feel really great about all the service we were able to do today, even though I feel like this morning was eight days ago, I had a lot of fun" one AmeriRACER stated at the finish line. I believe the whole Walla Walla Valley would agree to that.

After bringing up the tail in the first half of the race, persevering through several wrong turns and recovering from a 23 mile self imposed detour, the smallest team finished first and received the Amazing AmeriRACE cash prize. The Walla Walla AmeriCorps Team is now looking forward to the Amazing AmeriRACE 2010.



Left to right- Michelle Gwinn, Jessica Ruiz, Stephanie Lo, and Haley Brandenburg painting over Graffiti to clean up the city!!

Monte Cristo Students Show Their Civic Engagement and Giving Spirit

By Cheri Green, Washington Reading Corps member, Mount Vernon

When Jayme Bunkelman, Washington Reading Corps member, and Cheri Green, AmeriCorps VISTA, taught the students in Mrs. Howell's Multi-age class at Monte Cristo Elementary about civic engagement, they had no idea the ramifications or the lasting effects. After teaching the lessons on civic engagement, students were asked to come up with a project to give back to their local, regional or global community.

The students chose to extend an activity they were already doing, but little did they know how big it would get. Before the project, they had been corresponding with a soldier in Iraq who had made a passing comment about being able to give something to the kids in war-torn Iraq. Mrs. Howell's students ran with this idea.

The students excitedly put together a donation drive and even stood outside a local Rite Aid to collect items on Martin Luther King Day. Mrs. Howell donated her time on a non-school

day as an example to her students of how important the lesson was. The local Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) agreed to pay the postage to ship the donations to Iraq and Afghanistan. Unfortunately (well, fortunately for him), their pen-pal soldier was sent home on leave just prior to shipment, so they needed to find another soldier in Iraq and Afghanistan to whom to send the boxes.

By talking to other people in their community about the project, Mrs. Howell's class was able to find other soldiers stationed in the Middle East. Initially, the students thought they'd ship only 10 to 12 boxes, but when the items were packed and ready for mailing, 33 boxes were filled to the brim. The VFW still agreed to pay the postage although the project tripled what they were expecting.

Since its conception, more donations have rolled in and several more boxes have been shipped, totaling more than 80 since January. The students have even gotten

creative about coming up with ways to pay for the additional postage. One student earns a dollar for every time she practices her musical instruments. The kids continue to correspond back and forth and they've even received pictures of the Iraq/Afghanistan kids receiving their donated items. Just recently, one of their pen-pal soldiers came and made a personal visit to Mrs. Howell's class to thank them. The students said it has been a lesson that they will not soon forget.



Reading Corps members Jayme Bunkelman and Cheri Green putting together boxes for the Soldiers in Iraq.

Bundle Up Bags in Bremerton for MLK Day

By Washington Reading Corps members, Olympia

Before our team did this project, there was an empty building and a lack of items and resource information for the homeless. Now, thanks to the Bundle-up Bags from our project, there is warm weather gear being worn, resources being used, books being read, hygiene products being used, and food being eaten by nearly 100 homeless people.

We gathered donations for months in advance and then invited the community to join us in assembling bags of the items. All told, we gathered together nearly 100 reusable bags to provide to the homeless of Bremerton.

I think our group experienced a very special moment when we stood back at the end of the day and looked over the huge pile of bags we were able to fill with so many necessary items for the homeless. In fact, the community pitched in and gave so many items that we had overflow and we were able to donate to multiple agencies. This expanded the effect of our project and extended it beyond what we thought possible.

That finishing moment was filled with pride!



Peace, Love, and Chocolate

By Mike Pierce, Washington Service Corps member, Seattle

King County Housing Authority AmeriCorps members held their community-building civic engagement project on Feb. 21. It was a successful event entitled “Peace, Love and Chocolate” at the Southwest Boys and Girls Club in White Center.

Approximately 100 children and their families attended this event where they shared ideas, hugs and dance moves to create a more peaceful community.

There was an abundance of free chocolate provided by Theo, Seattle’s own fair-trade, organic chocolate maker, and food donated by small local businesses. The food represented the diverse cultures of the area, including Salvadorian, Mexican, Chinese, Vietnamese, American and Somali.

To kick off the event, the founder and CEO of Theo Chocolate spoke on the importance of fair trade to help create a more peaceful world.

Later in the day the Seattle Peace Choir performed a set of beautiful songs while all the children participated in creative activities, such as creating a square for the peace quilt, stringing chocolate necklaces, folding paper cranes and designing buttons.

The Seward Park Clay Studio generously donated 100 pounds of clay so that Habitat for Humanity AmeriCorps members could help the kids create their version of a peaceful city. There was even an interactive tunnel of peace that encouraged kids to explore their ideas of peace.

To close the event, Alex Kajumulo, a former professional soccer player turned musician, provided energetic funk-reggae songs that got everyone

up and dancing.

Many community organizations attended to spread their message of peace. They included West Seattle Neighbors for Peace and Justice, Seattle Center for Peace, Powerful Voices, Solid Ground, WSU 4-H, Habitat for Humanity East King County and ECOS.



Left to right— members Emily Ausema and Malia Delacruz working at the Origami craft table.

WSC/AmeriCorps SERVES

By Power of Hope members, Seattle

Imagine, if you will, 800 adults who have all given a year (sometimes two) to serve their community, swaying and singing along to “We are the ones we are waiting for” arranged by Ysaye Maria Barnwell and led by the Power of Hope’s own Devon Little and Alan Wong. Yeah, it was that cool.

That was the kick-off event for this year’s spring SERVES Conference, held this year in Yakima. (SERVES is a twice-a-year gathering of all Washington Service Corps members.)

The Power of Hope AmeriCorps was well represented by members Eli

Steffen and Rebecca White, and staff facilitators Alan and Devon. Rebecca and Eli attend many different workshops on topics such as Youth Development 101, Cultural Competency, and Paying for Graduate School, with a stop off at Power of Hope’s own workshop for some personal reflection and recharging.

For almost a decade, SERVES has invited Power of Hope facilitators to run workshops during both days of the conference. This spring, Alan Wong and Devon Little facilitated workshops as well as an interactive portion of the opening and closing sessions for the conference. In the opening and closing sessions, Alan and Devon

addressed the possible meaning and practicality of “hope.” During the conference, Alan and Devon facilitated workshops called “Integrating the Arts into Your Program,” “Theater for Community-Building,” and “Creative Development and Renewal for Service Workers.”



Power of hope energizing the members at SERVES!

WSC Individual Placement (IP) Program

The Washington Service Corps Individual Placement Program began in 1983 as a youth corps program. Since then, and the subsequent start of the AmeriCorps program in 1994, the Individual Placement program has more than tripled in size.

Agencies that partner with the Individual Placement Program host one to four members who address the community's educational, environmental, public safety and human service needs.

The Individual Placement program

has received approximately 100 applications for a host site and are looking forward to a new program year.

For more information on the Individual Placement Program, please contact the program's manager, Brigid Spellman, at 360-438-4045.

Seattle Children's PlayGarden Making a Difference

By Haley Mackrow, Individual Placement member, Seattle

When I first started at the Seattle Children's PlayGarden in September, I readily soaked up the mission and vision of the project. Working with special-needs students was new to me, but I felt at home right away as I often do with any social-justice cause.

I learned how hard it is for parents to find safe and supportive outdoor play environments for their children with special needs. And I learned how much of an injustice this is in our community. Of course, every child deserves the right to play and learn outside.

We work to be inclusive and provide a place where all kids feel welcome and where everyone can play. But I learned an even more important lesson this spring. Working in the garden with the kids taught me that everyone **can** play. Not only are they allowed to play, but all kids, of all abilities, are capable of playing.

The PlayGarden has been an endless supply of wonderful and challenging lessons. Sometimes the lesson is as simple as not interacting with the kids any differently than I would with their typically developing peers. Other times it is important to be conscious of how my physical contact needs to be adjusted to best suit their abilities. You should not always default to a handshake with an

introduction. Additionally, another situation require being conscious of when to know to put my hands on theirs to help them be successful with an art project.

While I grow personally, I know that our projects are helping the kids grow as well. After one of our classroom projects, one teacher wrote to tell me about the effect it had on her students.

"The children took their gardens home yesterday," the teacher said. "You should have seen the children carry the gardens with such care and pride. Our little echoic child spontaneously said 'garden.' Usually the only four words he will say are computer, cards, bathroom and pretzels."

In every classroom we visit, each child becomes a successful gardener and has their own mini 'garden' to take home with them. And after our 'quick-before-the-plaster-dries' garden art project, each student is bursting with energy to come get even more messy and wild at the PlayGarden.

Each of the two-dozen classrooms we visited will be invited to come to the PlayGarden for a field trip this spring. We hope that many of them

will be able to find the resources and staff to help make this trip a reality for their students. I personally look forward to all the kids continuing to teach me, and to playing and learning with them in the garden all summer long.



Haley Mackrow, IP member making mini gardens with the children.



Beautiful mini gardens made by students during the member classroom visits!

Environmental Symposium Inspires and Empowers Youth to Make Sustainable Change

By Mary Kate Wheeler, Individual Placement member, Seattle

In March, the YMCA Earth Service Corps (an Individual Placement program staffed by four AmeriCorps members) hosted “The Obtainable Sustainable,” a two-day environmental symposium in Seattle that brought together middle- and high-school students to explore issues of urban sustainability.

The event was a great success and reached more than 65 students each day from more than 15 schools.

At both the high-school symposium on March 6 and the middle-school symposium on March 7, students chose from a wide range of interactive workshops and treks, led by volunteer presenters from various environmental organizations and companies.

In one workshop, students made artwork from salvaged materials while learning about creative ways to reduce waste. Students who calculated their individual ecological footprints in another session reflected on the environmental consequences of their lifestyle choices and brainstormed ways to reduce their effect. Other workshop and trek topics included green building, alternative

transportation, water quality, community gardening, habitat restoration and composting. Each of the workshops gave students the tools and ideas to make their own homes, schools and communities more sustainable.

In organizing this event, the YMCA Earth Service Corps members more than doubled the scale and attendance of the previous year’s event.

Not only did they successfully recruit students, but they recruited more than 53 presenters and volunteers, and solicited more than \$3500 in donated goods, including breakfast and lunch on both days as well as eco-friendly giveaways and prizes.

As a result of the Obtainable Sustainable environmental symposium, more than 90 percent of students reported that they became more knowledgeable about environmental issues,



including urban sustainability and how to make a difference in their communities. In addition, 79 percent of the high-school students said they were motivated to take action in their communities and schools.

Youth making a difference!

A Fond Farewell

By Sonia Prazak, VISTA Leader, Olympia

Very soon, at the end of June, I will finish my third and final term as an AmeriCorps*VISTA member and my second year as a VISTA Leader with the Washington Service Corps.

Even as the excitement of the next journey is bubbling just below the surface, I cannot ignore the nagging thought in the back of my head, “What will life be like without AmeriCorps?”

I mean, for the past three years AmeriCorps has been my life. My memories include grey hoodies or T-shirts, Martin Luther King Day, Make a Difference Day, Symposium, SERVES, national service, AmeriCorps Week, conferences, trainings and PSO.

Do I remember what life is like outside of the Corps? Heck no! Not really, at least. And I guess what it really gets down to is that there will never really be a “life without the Corps” for me because AmeriCorps has somehow insinuated itself into my personality, my personal creed if you will, sometime within the past three years.

It’s a comforting feeling, like being a part of a tribe or something – an AmeriTribe or an AmeriCorps, I suppose. Anyway, by now you’re probably asking yourself what I will be doing with myself after I leave, right? After leaving my post in Olympia, I will head to Muscat, Oman (look it up), to begin a masters in global management degree. After that, the Peace Corps.

So, wish me luck and keep an eye out for my book. Ciao.

Upcoming Important Dates and Events

VISTA Pre-Service Orientation
August 24-27

AmeriCorps Launch
October 23

SERVES
October 26-29



This bulletin is based upon work supported by the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) under grant #06ACHWA0010101. Opinions and points of view expressed are those of the writers and do not necessarily reflect the official position of AmeriCorps, CNCS or the Employment Security Department.